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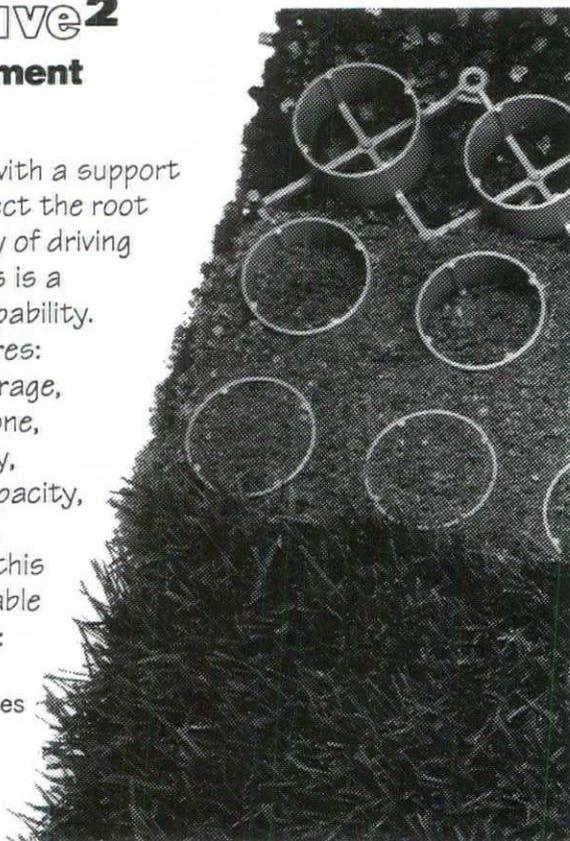
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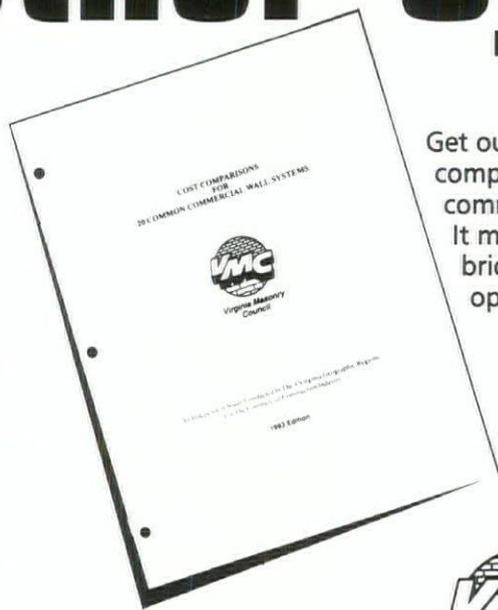
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volume four number four

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The State of Small Firms

Who could dispute the advantages of small architectural practice? There is ample opportunity to be expressive and work with clients through the life of a project. Yet because they wear so many hats, many principals of small firms struggle to find the balance between playing the role of business manager and designer.

By Lynn Nesmith

Rust, Orling & Neale Architects, Alexandria
Guernsey/Tingle Architects, Williamsburg
Gaver Nichols, Architect, Alexandria
Donald R. Sunshine, Blacksburg
Scribner, Messer, Brady & Wade, Richmond
Robert Wilson Mobley, AIA, Architect, Great Falls
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Frazier Associates, Staunton
Freeman & Morgan Architects, Richmond

6

Design Lines

new developments in design and the arts

24

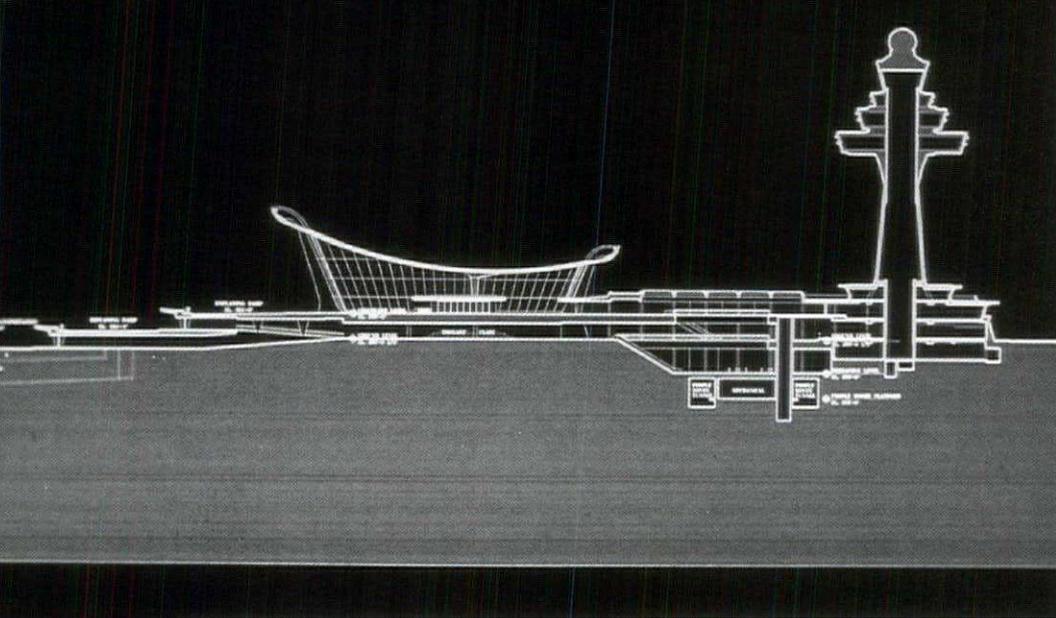
Books

the coast-to-coast critics' view



p.9

Cover design by Steven Longstaff.



The character of the original airport will be preserved by locating new people-moving operations underground (above). Models were built to study new entry vestibules (below).

Photos: Courtesy Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

Dulles Expansion Sparks Unique Preservation Debate

The planned expansion of Washington Dulles International Airport, Eero Saarinen's 1962 masterpiece that he hoped would "explain what I believe about architecture," is breaking new ground in the field of historic preservation. The terminal's hammocklike concrete roof and passenger-shuttling mobile lounges were innovations that led to Dulles' recognition in 1978 as a historic property, although it has not been formally designated as a Historic Landmark. Nonetheless, current design team members from Skidmore Owings & Merrill of New York and preservation consultants The Vitetta Group of Philadelphia have consulted with the state Department of Historic Resources and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to ensure that both renovation and new construction will be compatible with the airport envisioned by Saarinen.

Although the airport was a little-used curiosity for its first 20 years, business took off in 1985 with the evolution of Dulles as a major connecting hub. By doubling the length of the main terminal with 320-foot additions at each end and introducing an underground people-mover system, planners hope to accommodate peak growth of 40 to 50 million passengers annually. Already the passenger count exceeds 11 million a year, an increase from 2 million in just over a decade.

The ambitious \$500 million expansion plan is among the most significant of the Commonwealth's historic preservation projects because it is the first large-scale project in Virginia to tackle the thorny issues of preserving a Modern landmark. It may be a stretch of the imagination to consider Dulles, just 30 years old, a historic landmark. But the airport authority insisted from the outset that the expansion be undertaken with a historical architect on board.

The most difficult question addressed by the designers: How to preserve the significance of the airport while dramatically increasing its size? Although Saarinen's master plan anticipated the need for expansion, some program needs were unforeseen, including security requirements and a dramatic increase in international travel. The team wrestled with the question of whether materials assembled in the early 1960s had significance in themselves, or whether it was chiefly the ideas and theories embedded in the airport's design and construction that were important. Had the original concrete, steel and glass acquired "historic fabric" status in less than 30 years?

The answer is both yes and no. The original concrete structure will remain, but team participants chose to abandon obsolete fixtures. For example, the 1962 Solari flight information

boards, which featured rapidly rotating metal cards, were incapable of communicating the increased flight data and were replaced. The mobile lounges, the driving force of the original airport design, will be largely replaced by the new people-mover systems. In the near term, they will continue to be used to transport international travelers to U.S. Customs.

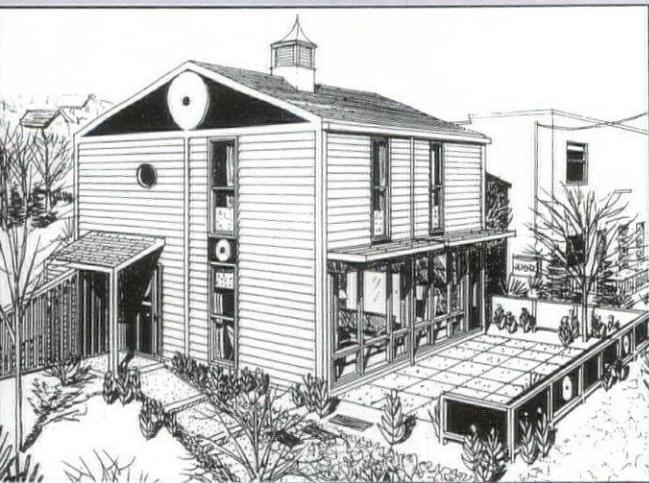
And how to distinguish the main terminal's new extensions from the original bays? Very subtly, as it turns out. The original polished concrete floor will be restored, rather than replaced, to make a recognizable joint between the old and new flooring. A slight difference in color between the new concrete pylons and the originals is anticipated. And all new fixtures at the ground and concourse levels will be designed, as much as possible, in compliance with the Saarinen guidelines. The curved roofs of the airport's extensions will be engineered to match the original catenary curve.

Richard Turner, the airport authority's staff architect, says the building's recognition as a historic property actually sped the expansion's planning and execution. "The perception was that preservation would make the project more difficult. But after the team got used to the idea, the preservation consultations facilitated a quicker turnaround, a smoother project."

—Mary Harding Sadler

The author is a historical architect with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources, and served as its representative in hearings on the Dulles expansion.





Cross's winning entry is economical to build, healthy to live in.

Affordable, Sustainable Housing Competition Winner Announced

Alexandria architect Eason Cross, Jr., of Virginia Architects Accord, was selected in November as the winner of a nationwide design competition for an affordable, sustainable house. Sponsored by the Virginia chapter of Architects, Designers and Planners for Social Responsibility (ADPSR) and the Virginia Society AIA, the competition called for a 1,100-square-foot house with materials costs of \$35,000 or less. In addition, the design was to be easy to build and sustainable – meaning its operation costs are low, materials environmentally safe and renewable, and interior finishes free of toxins and radiation. Second place went to a team from Dail Dixon & Associates of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and third place to William A. Edgerton & Associates of Charlottesville.

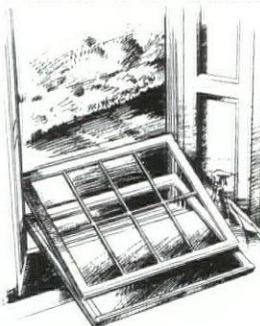
Cross's entry integrates passive solar features to capture heat from the winter sun. Low-tech cooling features include an overhang to limit summer sun penetration, a cupola to vent hot air from the house, and roll-down louvers to insulate the house at night. Panelized walls allow for close-in of the exterior in four days. "The combination of affordability and sustainability is groundbreaking," said David Wilkerson, chairman of ADPSR/Virginia. "The challenge is great in a project like this, because many of the materials we are talking about are more expensive, either because they are not readily available or because their high quality drives up the cost." Richmond Habitat for Humanity will provide volunteers to build the house on a site provided by the Richmond housing authority. ADPSR is seeking a sponsor to provide building materials.

Entries were judged by Jeffrey Levine of the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority; Elizabeth Reader, a Winchester architect whose affordable houses have received national attention, and Mark Tapazio, an Aylett builder specializing in environmentally-sustainable design.

Setting the Record Straight

An article on the U.S. Postal Museum in Inform 1993: number three (p. 7) failed to credit Shalom Baranes Associates of Washington, D.C., as architects for the lobby restoration. Also, Douglas Burke was omitted from the list of Crigler Associates' staff who worked on the firm's winning Building Better Communities entry (p.11).

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ARTS & CRAFTS

If anything fixed the image of California as a place of healthful, bountiful simplicity, the objects created during the heyday of the Arts and Crafts Movement in California did. Americans in the late 1800s already perceived California as different – the terminus of America's manifest destiny. "California was more than a dream; it offered to many committed Arts and Crafters a higher life, a mysticism or, as Bernard Maybeck claimed, a 'Divine Excellence'.... The vast and ever changing landscape gave people the opportunity to try almost anything, and many did," notes University of Virginia historian Richard Guy Wilson in the catalog accompanying the current exhibition, "The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life," at the Renwick Gallery in Washington.

California artisans grafted the unique natural forms and lush colors indigenous to the region onto English Arts and Crafts forms and developed a unique vernacular style. The Californians also produced their own variation on Spanish Colonial architecture – the Mission style. Their starting point was the movement that had



originated in England with the writings of William Morris, who excoriated the mass-produced products of the Industrial Revolution. The resulting movement nominally drew its aesthetic from medieval imagery and the belief in hand-craft as meditation. Its anti-industrial bias was informed by craftspeople like Gustav Stickley. By the time the movement became rooted in California, offshoots were thriving in Scandinavia, Vienna, Berlin, Brussels, Paris, Boston and Chicago. Ironically, in California, the style became the medium of choice to advertise the large land deals of the "Golden State."

Works from the best-known artisans of the California Arts and Crafts Movement are today a collector's dream: copper lamps by Dirk van Ert; furniture and *objets d'art* by Arthur and Lucia Mathews; lamps by Elizabeth Eaton Burton; furniture by Henry Mather Greene and Charles Sumner Greene; Redlands pottery by Westley Trippet; and pottery by Anna and Albert Alentien. The exhibition of 198 objects from the 1890s to 1930 runs through Jan. 9, but for those who don't get to the show, all is not lost. A handsome, well-written, thoroughly documented and generously illustrated catalog is available through the Renwick Gallery Shop.

9



Artisans flocked to California in the early 1900s and produced a remarkable range of objects, including a carved and painted throne chair by Reginald Machell (above), earthenware vase with sgraffito design by Arequipa Pottery (left), and lamp with opalescent glass shade by Ernest Batchelder and Douglas Donaldson (right).





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■ "Designing the Academical Village." Over 50 of Jefferson's drawings for The Lawn at U.Va., with samples of his architectural reference books and letters. Through Jan. 9 at the Bayly Art Museum, U.Va., Charlottesville. 804-924-3592.

■ "The Arts and Crafts Movement in California: Living the Good Life." An exhibit of pottery, furniture and metalwork produced between 1895 and 1930. Through Jan. 9 at the Renwick Gallery, Washington, D.C. 202-357-2700.

■ "Grandeur, Simplicity and Convenience." Architectural drawings and photographs recounting the history of the U.S. Capitol from 1793-1993. At The Barret House, Richmond, through Feb. 28. 804-644-3041.

■ "Inside Washington." A winter tour of interior spaces in Washington, D.C., includes the newly renovated Main Reading Room of the Library of Congress, St. Matthew's Cathedral and other remarkable sites. A Smithsonian Resident Associates Program. Feb. 5. Fee. 202-357-3030.

■ "Virginia Design Forum I." Keynote speakers Daniel J. Boorstin, Charles Gwathmey and Glenn Murcutt along with discussion leaders Paul Haigh, Adele Santos, Robert Campbell, Edward Ford, Dana Cuff and Randy Croxton lead a weekend symposium that will explore "Architecture and Innovation." At The Homestead, Mar. 18-20. Limited registration. Information: 804-644-3041.

■ A lecture on the historic preservation aspects of 1993 tax law changes with relevance to owners and restorers of historic properties. Attorney Thomas Coughlin, director of the National Preservation Institute, speaks on the subject Feb. 9 at the National Building Museum. Fee. 202-272-2448.

■ "Barn Again." An exhibit illustrating how agricultural practices and regional economies have shaped barns and created layers of meaning. Features a barn raising in the Great Hall. Beginning in March at the National Building Museum. 202-272-2448.

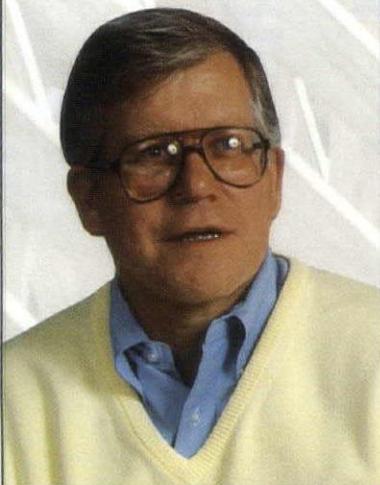
■ "Classical Taste in America, 1800-1840" An exhibit examining the connections between the founding fathers' ideals for the new nation and the Federal and Greek Revival styles that flourished in the early Republic after the Revolution. Through Mar. 13 at the Mint Museum, Charlotte. 704-337-2000.

■ Spring lectures by Stanley Tigerman, Billie Tsien and Douglas Cardinal are being sponsored by AIA Northern Virginia and the Washington, D.C., chapter. Call 703-549-9747 for schedule details and locations.



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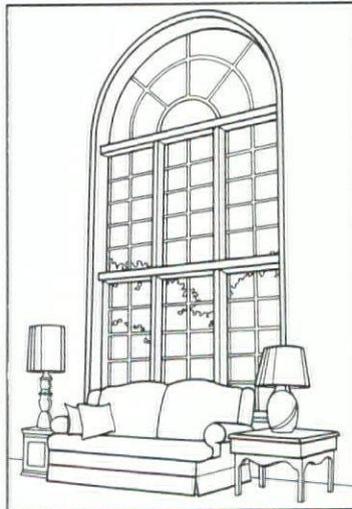
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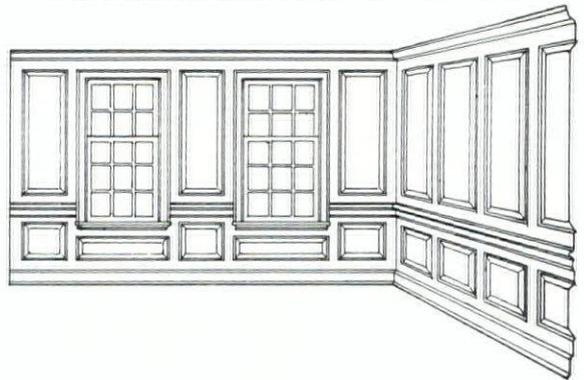
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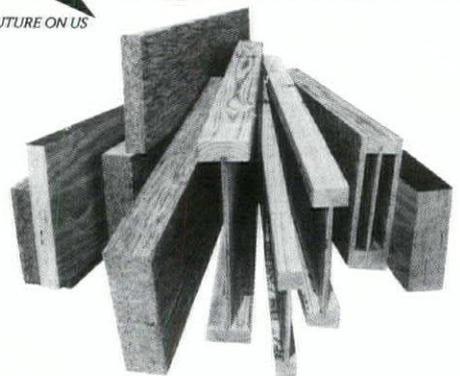
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Where donning many hats is an everyday fact of life

By Lynn Nesmith

All things considered, who would dispute the advantages of a small architectural practice? Lacking the hierarchy and bureaucracy of a corporate design firm, the small office offers ample opportunities to express oneself and to work directly with clients from project conception through construction. But if the benefits of a small firm are obvious, so are the drawbacks. A small practice is more restricted than a large one in the commissions for which it can compete. Running a firm, no matter what its size, still means

managing a business. And because they wear so many hats in the course of a day, many small firm principals struggle to find the right balance between managing the practice and actually practicing design.

Small architecture firms might not get their share of publicity in national trade or consumer magazines, but they are unquestionably the backbone of the profession. A 1993 survey of the American Institute of Architects reported that 86 percent of member firms have nine or fewer employees. *(continued on page 20)*

Building on Local Traditions

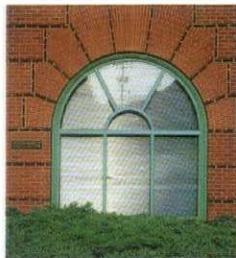


Photos: Michael Dersin, Courtesy Brick Institute of America

14

Fifteen years ago in Old Town Alexandria, John Rust, Mark Orling, and Wayne Neale consolidated their individual practices to form Rust, Orling & Neale. The strong architectural tradition of the community continues to influence the practice. Although the firm has evolved with a broad focus – their project list includes housing, mid-sized office buildings, retail stores, corporate facilities and land use plans – the bulk of its work, and some of its best, is within the city's historic district. The firm's hometown portfolio includes small additions, renovations, new buildings for infill sites and mixed-use complexes covering entire city blocks.

"Many successful small firms tend to be community-based," explains Orling. "As the development process becomes more complicated in terms of codes and approval processes, environmental concerns and citizen activism, local firms have a decided advantage in their knowledge of community players, experience with review boards, citizen task forces, city councils and planning departments." Although some architects complain about the stringent design guidelines of Alexandria's historic district, Rust, Orling & Neale maintains a commitment to creating "humanist" places that people enjoy, while winning design awards in the process. Significantly, the awards have come for buildings with a wide range of different uses, which Orling says is "an indication of the creative process applied effectively to new problems." Each of the principals has deep roots in the region. Both Rust and Orling graduated from



Virginia Tech in 1972, while Neale earned his architectural degree from the University of Maryland the same year. Like many firms, Rust, Orling & Neale fluctuated during the booming '80s, peaking at a staff of 15. A steady stream of retail, developer and public-sector work allowed the firm to maintain a satellite office in West Virginia until 1989.

Today, the firm is composed of five architects and two administrative staff. In response to market conditions, Rust,

Orling & Neale has remained competitive with low overhead and the flexibility to build a team when additional expertise is required. The office organization, hierarchy and division of labor are very straightforward, according to Orling. "You go out and get a job, and then you do the work," he explains. Over the years, Rust, Orling and Neale also branched out beyond traditional practice to serve as the developer of both residential and commercial projects. "We firmly believe that this hands-on experience translates directly into the buildings we produce for our clients," says Orling. "This experience allows us to assess not only the project design, but also the time-value of money as it relates to the complete range of development issues."

– L.N.

Located on a prominent wedge-shaped site at the north end of Alexandria, the headquarters for the American Academy of Physicians Assistants acts as a gateway to the city. Rust, Orling & Neale's design (above) blends traditional motifs into a symmetrical design that gives equal emphasis to the two major facades.

Coming at Design from Both Ends

While Roger Guernsey and Tom Tingle have completed their share of high-end custom homes for affluent clients, their partnership is all the more vibrant because of the energy they devote to housing for low- to moderate-income families. Guernsey donates his services to Housing Partnerships Inc., a Williamsburg non-profit group that assists people on meager incomes. In 1988 he designed two bare-bones "warm and dry" houses – small dwellings built by volunteers for poor rural landowners. "We would tear down their trailer or shack and build the new house, which cost from \$15,000 to \$20,000," says Guernsey, a Peace Corps veteran. He recently completed a new generation of "warm and dry" houses suitable for construction in existing neighborhoods and costing about \$30,000. Those projects go largely unnoticed. But Guernsey/Tingle has actively sought publicity for a plan book of moderate-cost houses that it markets nationally. Selected for their modest size and cost, the houses range as large as 2,200 square feet. The catalog has generated sales of plans all over the U.S. and as far away as Japan.

Guernsey, a Carnegie Mellon University graduate, migrated to Williamsburg from Vermont. In 1983, he launched Magoon/Guernsey Architects with colleague Bob Magoon and hired Tingle a year later. When Magoon left in 1989, Tingle was already a principal – and thus was born Guernsey/Tingle. The firm grew to 14 employees to keep up with the flood of master planning, office design and large-scale site development work coming in. But when the speculative work dried up, the staff shrank back to four. "The recession returned us to a focus on residential and recreational projects," says Tingle, a Virginia Tech graduate.

The practice still includes a long list of custom houses in the \$300,000 to \$400,000 range. The firm also does a fair share of "abbreviated design" work for a local builder, upgrading off-the-shelf plans to please buyers. "It's a way to provide architectural services to clients who might not otherwise be able to afford them," says Tingle. Known for designing houses with dramatic pitched roofs and open floor plans, Guernsey/Tingle has done its part to introduce modern style to conservative Williamsburg. But the partners have slowly gravitated closer to tradition. Says Tingle: "It has made the work feel warmer – less stark and more refined than the buildings we might have done several years ago." – *Vernon Mays*



Photos: David Patterson

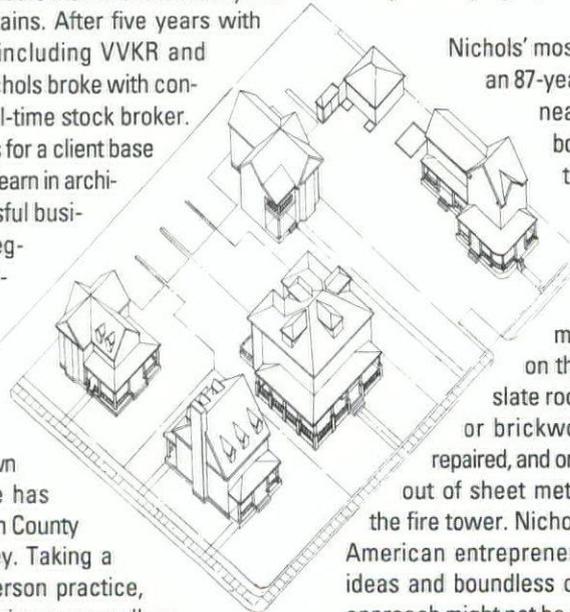


The entrance hall of Tingle's own house (above) presents a spatial complexity and multitude of views from room-to-room that are typical of the firm's residential designs. Outside, a view of the rear facade reveals the clear organization of the house as three stepped pavilions.

A conventional architecture practice has little appeal for Gaver Nichols. In his view, most architectural problems are far more complex than issues of design or aesthetics. "We all know that the man with the money really controls the design," Nichols maintains. After five years with established Northern Virginia firms including VVKR and Henningson, Durham & Richardson, Nichols broke with convention, leaving design to become a full-time stock broker. Six years of building investment portfolios for a client base of 500 taught him "everything one doesn't learn in architecture school about running a successful business." In addition to his architectural registration, he is a licensed insurance broker, real estate agent and annuities broker.

In 1988, Nichols re-hung his architectural shingle in Alexandria and has since renovated dozens of houses in his own neighborhood. Recently his practice has expanded to include projects in Loudoun County and in North Carolina and New Jersey. Taking a true hands-on approach in his one-person practice, the 39-year-old Nichols works as designer as well as developer, contractor, realtor, financial coordinator, carpenter and landscaper. "Too many architects are frustrated in their

attempts to find work and be paid what they are really worth," says Nichols. "I'm determined to find a way to replace the architectural patron of old by developing my own work."



Nichols' most ambitious project to date – the renovation of an 87-year-old fire house into studio/loft apartments – is nearing completion in Camden, New Jersey. He bought the historic structure five years ago, pulled together a group of investors and timed the venture to coincide with redevelopment spurred by Camden's new aquarium. Into the restored shell of the fire station Nichols inserted six apartments and retail space on the ground floor. A new slate roof was installed, exterior brickwork was cleaned and repaired, and ornate cornices fabricated out of sheet metal were recreated for the fire tower. Nichols is the quintessential American entrepreneur, bursting with new ideas and boundless optimism. Although his approach might not be suited for everyone, he has carved out a niche in a changing profession that seems to be paying off. —L.N.

On a small-scale subdivision project in Alexandria, Nichols is involved in the full cycle of design-build-develop-sell activity. He is renovating a 19th century boarding house on the original site and building four new houses on infill parcels surrounding it.

Donald R. Sunshine

As a professor of architecture, I consider it essential to my development that I practice," says Donald Sunshine, a faculty member at Virginia Tech's College of Architecture. "Those of us who teach are really in a privileged position. We have the opportunity to practice in a way that others can't, and special responsibilities come with that. The projects we do are more in the manner of research by design."

That search takes different forms, depending on the project. For a commission to convert a rural cabin into a weekend getaway, Sunshine first plunged into books and gathered oral history from local farmers to find out more about the original house. It led to his learning of the "2/3 House" (see illustrations) and its origins in the Southern landscape. Another time, a client's request for a shed to store life vests at Mountain Lake Hotel prompted Sunshine's investigation of additional purposes the building might serve. Eventually it was built as a boathouse pavilion on the water, strategically located so guests can sit quietly and enjoy framed views of the rustic hotel. "Those are issues that all architects pursue, but I just have an opportunity in this limited kind of practice to pursue them often in more depth," says Sunshine, who won a design award from AIA Blue Ridge for the lake project. Sunshine received his architecture degrees from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. He worked with archi-

tects John Carl Warnecke in San Francisco and Harry Weese in Chicago before opening his own practice. Then in 1967 he won a fellowship that took him to Europe for six months of travel and returned knowing he wanted to teach. He began as a lecturer at Illinois' Chicago campus and in 1973 came to Virginia to teach at Hampton University "for a year." Two years passed. Then three. While at Hampton, he led field trips to other architecture schools "and I was so impressed with what was going on at VPI that I said, 'We have to go there.'"



2/3 House



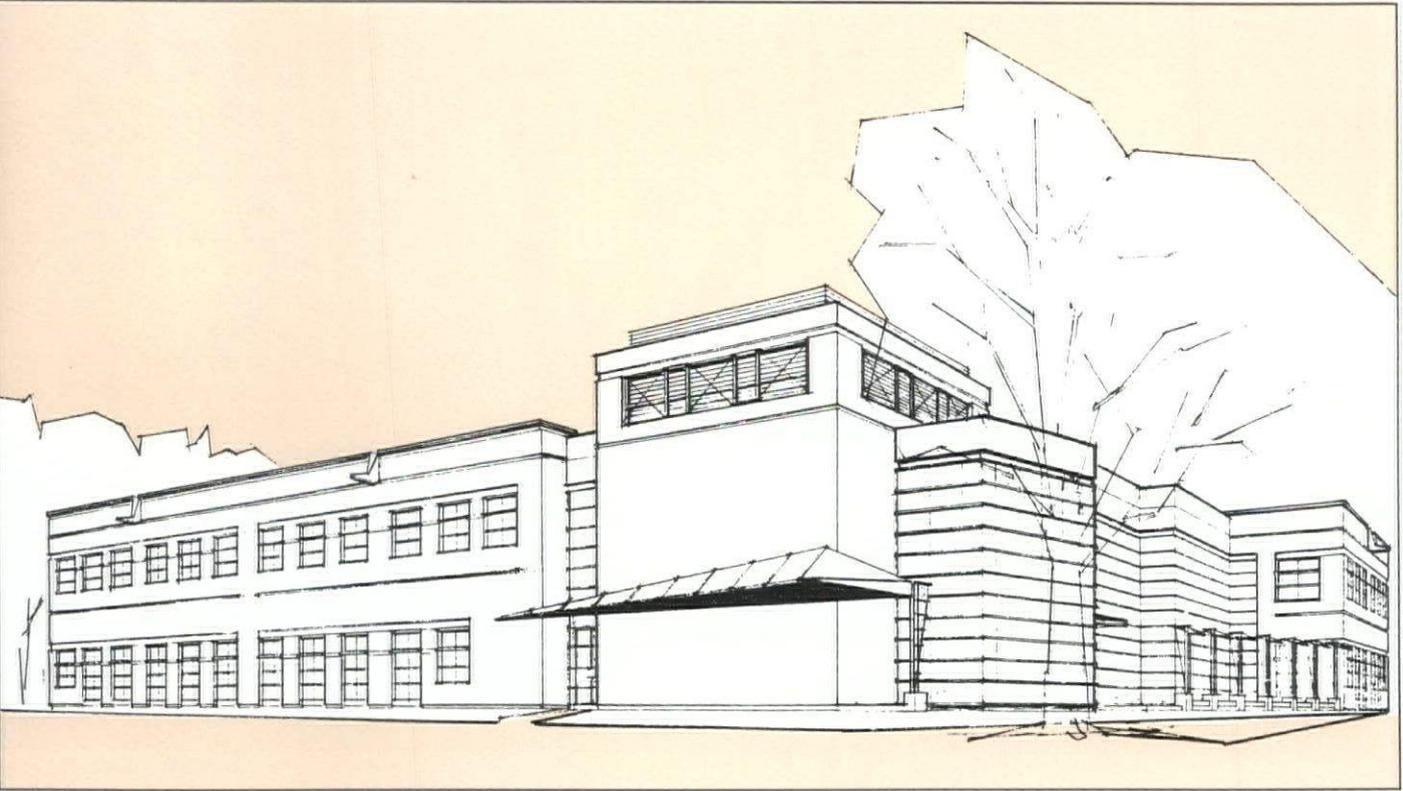
Central Hall House



Meanwhile, Sunshine says his primary interests – responsiveness to the site, a particular way of building, and the accommodation of human activities – serve as assets to both his teaching and practice activities. —V.M.

Before renovating a rural cabin, Sunshine discovered the 140-year-old structure was a classic "2/3 House," designed with center hall and flanking rooms but often only partially built, for cost reasons. His solution: complete the remaining third (above).

Spinning Off on Their Own



17

As principal of a firm that got its start just over two years ago, Will Scribner has a good point when he says "we have gotten out of the blocks very quickly." Scribner, Messer, Brady & Wade – a Richmond architecture and interiors partnership that is aggressively chasing plum projects across the state – already can claim a major role in one of Richmond's newest downtown landmarks and has nosed out seasoned competitors for a pair of recent commissions at Virginia Tech.

One could argue that the firm really got its start back in the early '80s, when the four principals played key roles in the interiors department at Glave Newman Anderson, a well-established firm that had built its reputation with preservation, public-sector and institutional work. By the late '80s, GNA had become multi-faceted, and Scribner says he and current partners Becky Messer, Shelli Brady and Bland Wade found themselves largely responsible for a 25-person group that focused on the design of large-scale interiors – particularly in the high-rise James Center complex in Richmond – and suburban office buildings. The ensuing economic slump prompted self-examination within GNA, and Scribner says "we found we didn't have that much in common anymore. We had each become creatures of our own types of practice."

It was particularly GNA's transition to suburban spec office buildings that gave Scribner and partners the confidence to jump out on their own. "With that background, we felt that we could take that skill and cohesion and build a practice," he says. Scribner and Wade, the architects, along with Messer and Brady, both interior designers, made the break officially in July 1991, bolstered by an association with GNA on the state-

backed Theater Row Office Building in Richmond. (Scribner, et al, were responsible for programming, interior design and construction administration.) Scribner credits his former employers with teaching him to push architectural design to a point of completion, which he says has improved the quality of the new firm's office designs. "I think we have carried over the best aspects of institutional building into what otherwise might be seen as a glitzy building type."

From humble beginnings in Scribner's backyard carriage house, the firm has grown to 15 people – including eight architectural staff and four interior designers – and new quarters in a renovated office building. The firm has completed two small office projects in Colonial Heights. Its design for a 100,000-square-foot office building in Chesterfield County is under construction and office interiors for an advertising firm and insurance company are complete. In addition, Scribner recently snagged two commissions for buildings at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center: a National Weather Service Forecasting Facility and new research lab building. "We are also developing a strong analytical practice," says Messer, noting that such services include cost analyses, market analyses and design consultation. The next task for the firm is to penetrate the institutional market, says Scribner. "We need to broaden the base of our practice." – V.M.

The newest development at the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center is a 40,000-square-foot research lab, which features glass-and-steel stair towers and a winglike entrance canopy set against a backdrop of simple masonry boxes (above). It is planned as the first of four buildings on the site.

Indulging a Taste for Residential Design



18

Bob Mobley has weathered the economic cycles of practice long enough to have progressed from doing “small houses with small budgets to big houses with big budgets.” Maybe it’s precisely because residential design has seen him through tough times that Mobley has maintained that as a focus to his three-person practice. “There can be no doubt I truly love designing houses and the personal relationships that develop between client and architect,” he says. “But I miss the commercial projects, too, because they serve as an excellent counterpoint to residential design, allowing an architect to use his problem-solving skills in a more objective manner. Architects are trained problem-solvers and I believe diversification sharpens our skills and specialization dulls them.”

Mobley says the story of any firm like his is that “I *am* the firm.” He gives the practice its direction and finds the work. Over the years, most of his employees have been young graduates working toward licensure. Presently, the situation is different because both of his employees are registered architects. “Now the firm has much more of a collaborative nature,” says Mobley, who enjoys the life of a small practice. “Clients appreciate receiving direct and personal attention, the office provides an excellent environment for my staff to learn, and I enjoy being directly involved in every project.” The primary down-side of being small is the absence of so-called significant projects, says Mobley, who offsets that by seeking joint-ventures with other firms when the project size, schedule or work load requires it. About 70 percent of Mobley’s projects are residential, and the location of work is split 50-50 between in-

Converting a 1933 Sears, Roebuck mail-order house into an upscale dwelling (above) required attention to scale and detailing. While he added an entry foyer, great room, master suite, garage, studio and breakfast room, Mobley offset the additions at each end to preserve the lines of the original house.

state and out-of-state projects, with current commissions in Maryland, Delaware, North Carolina and the Pacific Northwest. Mobley has purposely held the firm at three people for more than a decade, choosing to remain small even when the pressures to grow were tremendous. One effect of the recession, however, is that he sometimes struggles to preserve relationships with difficult clients that he might have turned his back on during boom times. “Some of my buildings have suffered for it.”

Still, there have been many projects to crow about. For five years straight in the late ‘80s, Mobley took honors in the Fairfax County Exceptional Design Awards program. He also has won design awards from the AIA at both the state and chapter levels. Mobley has done his part to advance the design-consciousness of the profession as chair of a statewide design task force in 1989, and he has served the AIA through board service in Northern Virginia during 1987-88. In 1994 he joins the Virginia Society AIA board of directors.

— V.M.



Generating Forms That Fit the Congregation.



Photos: Al Whitley



The son of an architect, Lawrence Cook trained in the late 1950s under Louis I. Kahn at the University for Pennsylvania, where his father had also studied. Continuing the family tradition for another generation, Cook's son now attends Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-ARC), a highly regarded, if somewhat less traditional, architecture school in Los Angeles.

Cook formed his own office in 1971. Starting with his first commission, St. Timothy's Church in Centreville, Virginia, he began to establish a well-deserved reputation for excellence in liturgical design. "I really enjoy designing religious facilities," he maintains. "Congregations are interested in a unique architectural expression, as opposed to off-the-shelf mass-produced work." When beginning a new job, Cook attempts to incorporate liturgical reforms with traditional religious iconography, all the while responding to functional needs and the unique demands of each congregation. To reinforce the continuity of local tradition in his architecture, Cook often incorporates indigenous materials, site-specific energy efficiency strategies and local renewable resources. Accordingly, each of Cook's churches is far different from the last.

Parishioners seem to like the approach; often he is invited back as congregations grow and need more space. One recent example is the Burke Presbyterian Church (see *Inform*, Jan./Feb. 1991, p. 20). More than a decade earlier Cook completed a sanctuary and classroom building. His later wing, housing a library, meditation room and administrative offices, creates a sophisticated and exceedingly cohesive religious complex. Cook's office is run more like a fellowship than a cut-throat business. His studio, featuring an open and light-filled drafting room, is located adja-

cent to his house – which he designed and built during the early '70s recession. The complex overlooks Lake Barcroft, an oasis of civility tucked amid the sprawl of Northern Virginia. Employees are hired on a temporary basis for one to two months, and other staff members must voice their approval before a permanent job is offered.

Although the organization is egalitarian, when it comes to design responsibility Cook admits he maintains a tighter rein. "I design every project and follow it all the way through," he says.

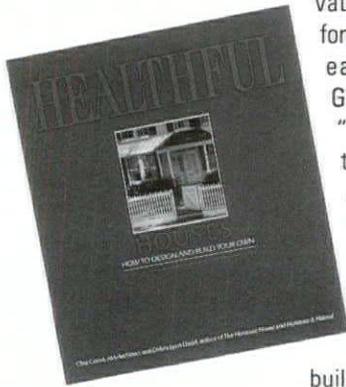
Cook is determined to provide individual design attention to every project. His practice is not limited to churches; he has designed public recreational buildings for the state and county, medical offices, and several chancelleries for the U.S. State Department. "In the boom years of the 1980s," Cook recalls, "we turned work away when we had enough projects in the office to keep 10 people busy." Things have slowed down a bit. But with a staff of six and a number of churches on the boards, Cook is not complaining. In addition to design, Cook has also left time for service to the profession. Currently vice president of the Virginia Society AIA, Cook also served as president of the Northern Virginia chapter in 1982. For two years, he was national president of the Interfaith Forum on Religion, Art and Architecture, a national organization that promotes quality church design and shares information among architects.

—L.N.

Cook used a traditional shape in designing the Lutheran Church of the Abiding Presence, but combined it with a sophisticated, non-traditional window pattern (above). Charcoal blocks laid in steady rhythm anchor the scissor trusses, which rise overhead toward clerestory windows. Cook also designed the chancel furniture.

Clint Good Architect

Clint Good is recognized as a pioneer in the area of non-toxic design and environmentally sensitive construction. Although he has established a successful niche, Good's initial involvement in environmental design was for personal, not financial, reasons. "In renovating a house for myself in the early 1980s," Good explains, "I discovered that I had acute chemical sensitivities and I was unable to live with standard building materials." He sold that house and designed for himself one of the first "non-toxic" residences in the country.



Realizing that his own adverse reaction was not unique, Good set out to help others who might share his affliction. In 1987, he published *Healthful Houses: How to Design and Build Your Own*, a book (see above) that describes his experiences and provides advice to homeowners and architects on improving indoor air quality. However, Good has not limited his market to chemically-sensitive homeowners. In the past few years Good, who is based in the small Loudoun County town of Lincoln, has broadened his focus to include environmentally responsible design and material selection. He has recently completed a second book that will take a more broad-based approach to healthy design, and is in final negotiations with a publisher.

As more commercial clients demand tough ecological standards, Good has teamed up with renowned firms such as Hardy Holtzman Pfeiffer as an environmental consultant to specify products with low toxicity. "I have found that there existed healthier alternatives to many of the products commonly used in the building industry, but many of these options were largely unknown or ignored because they were not readily available," he says. Although his environmental practice is thriving, Good emphasizes that he is first and foremost an architect involved in all aspects of design. "Sustainable architecture should not be isolated or narrow in scope, but rather a holistic approach that considers the health of people and the health of the earth," says Good. —L.N.

(continued from page 13)

The study also found that about 10,000 of the 17,000 AIA firms are composed of a single architect, the sole proprietor of the firm (although there may be a secretary or other nonprofessional on staff).

While it is common for law or accounting firms to employ more than 100 professionals, there are fewer than a dozen architectural design firms in the U.S. with more than 100 architects. The design profession is a fragmented marketplace. In addition, the corporate merger and acquisition frenzy of Wall Street in the 1980s completely bypassed the architectural profession, and the recession of the early 1990s has spawned an increase in the number of small architecture firms. In 1989, 17 percent of architects worked in offices with 10 or more employees compared to only 14 percent today. The 1993 survey also found that 31 percent of architects are sole proprietors; five years ago the figure was 22 percent. Today, 35 percent practice in an office of two to four; and 20 percent work in firms with five to nine architects. (In the mid-Atlantic region an even higher percentage of architects — 38 percent — are single practitioners.)

However, for many architects this professional arrangement is by choice and for profit — not at the whim of external forces, says AIA Resident Fellow James Franklin, whose job is to analyze small firm practice. A significant number of small firm practitioners are alumni of large firms and many of these principals report a present level of personal satisfaction much higher than before, Franklin says. "You really get to experience the full range of architecture in a small practice," says Harry McKinney, who heads a five-person firm in Abingdon. "In addition, quality control is automatically built into the process because you get direct feedback all along the way." McKinney also believes that his generalist practice, which includes institutional, medical, educational and residential work, is a good place for a young

architect to learn the ropes of the profession. "Everybody in my firm must be able to do everything," McKinney says. "You follow a project from the interview to the client's move-in day."

Architects who intern in small firms acknowledge the benefits of their learning environment. Clint Good, who worked for several large firms before landing a job with Gauthier Alvarado & Associates in Northern Virginia, maintains that every young architect should work in a small office that offers a broad base of experience. "If you are stuck in a specialized department of a large firm, you'll never gain the experience you need to start your own practice," Good adds.

There are no formulas or established thresholds in deciding when to make the break from an established firm. In July 1991, Will Scribner and three associates left the Richmond firm Glavin Newman Anderson to launch their own practice. "We opened an office in a carriage house behind my house," says Scribner. "Within a month, we had enough work to hire a staff and move to new quarters." Scribner, Messer, Brady & Wade has grown to 15 employees doing a variety of major projects, while many architects have found that the key to a successful practice is a narrower focus. As clients become more sophisticated, they demand specialization. "Everyone wants to hire an expert," explains Lawrence Cook, a Falls Church architect who is known for his church architecture. "Clients don't want to commission an architect who dabbles in too many fields." Still, becoming a niche firm doesn't necessarily mean that architects must throw an armful of their credentials out of the window or turn away work that is outside of their specialty. Cook has also designed recreational buildings and chancelleries in India and North Africa.

Design competitions continue to be a rewarding way for a small firm to get a foot in the door. Although competitions

(continued on page 22)

Frazier Associates

Frazier Associates specializes in historic preservation, but the scope of its practice is far from limited. Although the office does traditional architectural work, the majority of the practice involves the social, research, educational and political aspects of historic preservation. "We live in a multidisciplinary world," says principal William Frazier. "Most of our projects involve complex social issues in addition to design concerns."

The professional makeup of the firm reflects this multidisciplinary approach. William Frazier and his partner and wife, Kathleen Frazier, both graduated from the University of Virginia and have extensive experience in design and urban planning, as well as the administrative aspects of community revitalization and preservation. Providing architectural expertise, the practice comprises architects John Runkle and Jeff Stark and interior designer Lester Bowers, who gained earlier experience at Skidmore Owings & Merrill in New York.

Established in 1986, the six-person firm has completed more than 600 facade designs for the Virginia Main Street Program, a statewide community redevelopment initiative that operates in conjunction with the



National Trust for Historic Preservation. Working in towns from Manassas to Galax to Suffolk, the firm conducts design workshops, develops feasibility studies, creates facade designs, establishes design guidelines and assists building owners to apply for tax credits. "Public education is a key ingredient of the Main Street Program," explains Frazier. "Our goal is to bring a design ethic back to the community and use design as an important element of economic revitalization." Practicing what it preaches, the firm is housed in an award-winning restored log tavern in the historic district of downtown Staunton.



In addition to the Main Street work, Frazier Associates has developed new community design guidelines and established architectural review board training programs for towns and cities throughout Virginia, including Arlington, Fairfax, Herndon, Lynchburg and Smithfield. Recently, the firm has completed several adaptive reuse projects in Staunton and is designing residential projects too. —L.N.

Frazier Associates assists small-town business owners with facade designs, cost estimating and advice on applying for rehab tax credits. The before-and-after sequence of a Suffolk peanut shop (left) shows what kind of success can result.

Freeman & Morgan Architects

Richmond-based Freeman & Morgan has focused during the past decade on retail and sports-related projects, designing more than 70 shopping centers and 30 bowling centers. The emphasis on retail design emerged almost by accident, says architect John C. Morgan. A developer offered a small retail job and "we found out it was a test," says Morgan. "We hit a home run, getting the building permit in 30 days. So they gave us three more big projects right away. Next thing I knew, we were experts on shopping center design." The firm has completed shopping centers across Virginia and Maryland, and is now working on a 12-building complex near Osaka, Japan, that will be executed in a Colonial Williamsburg vernacular.

As a lead consultant for AMF bowling centers, Freeman & Morgan is riding the trend toward upscaling the sport and improving its image. "In Europe, bowling centers are built as nicely as cinemas are here," says Morgan. "AMF is trying to improve them to attract more of middle America. We do that through the amenities." Morgan received his architecture degree from Virginia Tech in 1967 after studying business for two years first. The business training helped him fall right into the management side of things when he joined Budina & Freeman, an



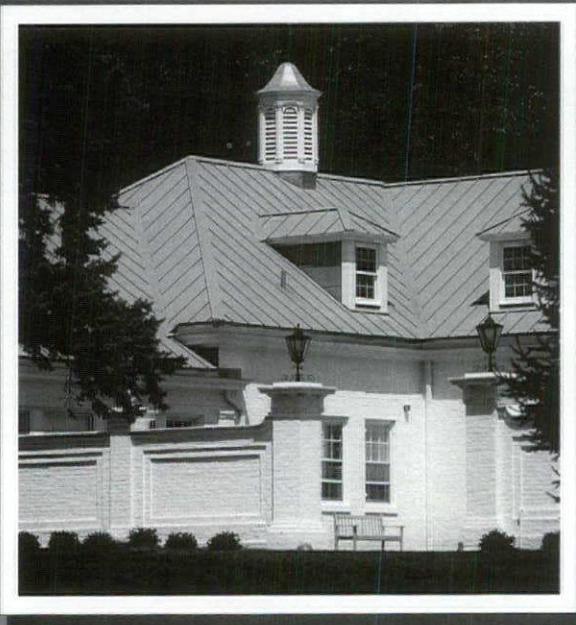
old-guard Richmond firm, in 1971. Morgan became a partner with Horace Freeman after Budina's death. And when he later took over sole control of the firm, Morgan asked former colleague John E. Shady to join him as a principal. "Jack's construction experience and my design experience have made a great combination," he says.

In recent years the firm has run lean with four architects and a secretary. But four more architects were added this year to keep up with several auto dealerships and military projects that have erased the memory of slow times. The firm just completed a massive 135,000-square-foot auto showroom in Kuwait City. And another large project, the 3,500-seat Cecil D. Hylton Memorial Chapel, is now under construction in Dale City. Morgan says the firm doesn't adhere to a strict marketing plan, but relies on good people, hard work, budget control and sound construction administration for its successes. —V.M.

Morgan says his client wanted to echo the feeling of horse country architecture in the Shops at Bellgrade (left). The brick buildings were painted for a "white-washed look" and feature cupolas, roof shapes and heavy cornices reminiscent of Churchill Downs.

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can be time-consuming and clearly are not a money-making prospect, architects often participate to gain recognition in a particular building type. In addition, some competition entries can generate other commissions. But winning a competition certainly gives a small firm the boost it needs to rise to the next level. In 1981, the fledgling Rust Orling & Neale Architects won a national competition to design Towne Centre Place, a 65-unit low-density housing project for low- and moderate-income residents in Olney, Maryland. Eight years after completion, the project is considered a model for its building type.

Learning the business of architecture – the allocation of resources, time and staff – is a do-or-die challenge for the principal of a small firm. “In the 19th century, you couldn’t practice architecture unless you were willing to think of yourself as a businessman – that is, not be embarrassed by those things that the school often encouraged students to be embarrassed by,” maintains Princeton University architecture professor Robert Gutman, a noted authority on practice issues. To handle the diverse demands of running an office, many talented designers team up with strong managers. After nearly 20 years of running his own three-person office, Marion architect Cameron Wolfe hired his son to serve as business manager. “The arrangement is working,” says C.J. Wolfe. “My dad would much rather devote his attention to design.”

New roles for architects and new methods of practice are significantly changing small as well as large firms. Many small firms achieve an effective elasticity by hiring on a project-by-project basis. The Williamsburg firm of Guernsey/Tingle Architects, currently a three-person firm that peaked in 1989 with 14 employees, has responded to business fluctuations by calling on former staff, both registered architects and technicians, as needed. “Past employees know our expectations and understand our office procedures,” explains principal Tom Tingle. Like many small firms, Tingle’s was reluctant to add full time employees before having enough ongoing work. Although the system is working, Tingle happily reports the firm anticipates adding two or three architects this year.

Small firms do have inherent advantages. Most clients value small firms for their imagination, good listening ability, personal chemistry and individual attention. “We most accentuate those strengths,” maintains Mark Orling, “and remind our clients that bigger does not mean better. Creativity in design and responsibility in business still resides within the individual, not in numbers of individuals.”

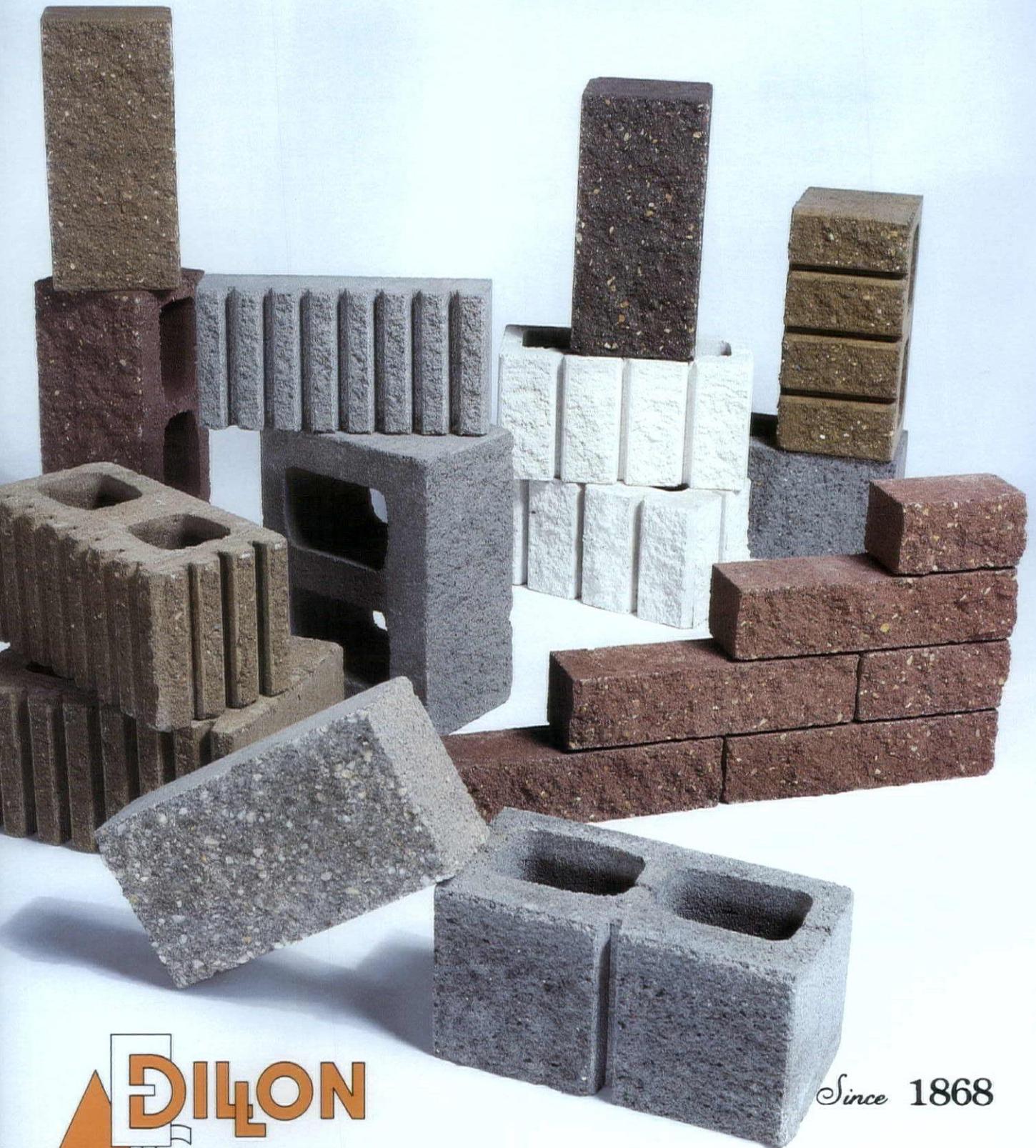


Lynn Nesmith, a former senior editor of Architecture magazine, is an Alexandria freelance writer.

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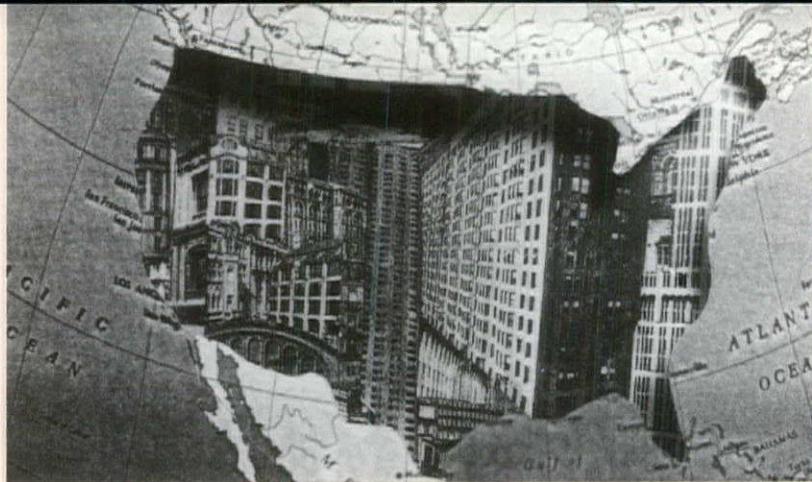
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Urban detail from book jacket, Exquisite Corpse

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From California to New York, three noted critics put the perpetrators of rampant development and irresponsible design in their proper place.

Exquisite Corpse: Writings on Buildings

By Michael Sorkin. 365 pp. London and New York: Verso. \$34.95 cloth.

Good criticism, architectural or otherwise, is made from a strongly felt point-of-view, a distinctive vantage point, a world class vocabulary and the intellectual engine to drive it. Being able to write with style and wit, as well, doesn't hurt the cause. Michael Sorkin, the former architecture critic for *The Village Voice*, delivers on all counts in *Exquisite Corpse*. He provides a compendium of diverse essays and articles, a provocative and fiercely funny look at the ebb and flow of architectural culture, particularly that which is centered on New York and its attendant obsessions.

Sorkin, a particularly astute observer, practices a form of mongoose journalism, quickly pouncing at the slightest hiss of polemical pretense, puffed up self-importance or faulty logic coming from the many personalities and institutions that spewed noxious ideological venom over the past decade. The term "biting criticism" assumes a new flavor after experiencing Sorkin eviscerating one egregious transgressor after another. No prisoners are taken. Postmodernism, for example, is greeted thusly: "Having arrived riding the nag of history, its view was blinkered, its horizons hemmed by the Villa Giulia and Monticello. That architectural culture at the end of the 20th century should be dominated by the apostles of 'classicism,' however ersatz, can only be the symptom of an institution in deep

distress, a vile zit on the schnoz of culture." Sorkin takes things personally. His convictions, fiercely held, are founded in a self-confessed "deep love of the ideals of modern architecture" which harbors both adventure and hope. The '80s, a particularly cynical and self-absorbed decade, provided him with many opportunities to bare his fangs. A partial inventory includes: self-aggrandizing power cliques such as Philip Johnson (a favorite target) and those in his circle of influence; nakedly avaricious developers (does the name Trump ring a bell?) abetted by the deregulated giveaway development strategies of the Reagan/Koch years; intellectual cheap shots such as Tom Wolfe's *From Bauhaus to Our House*; the nostalgic retro-classicism of Leon Krier and Ricardo Bofill; misguided additions to the Whitney and Guggenheim museums; and blatantly self-promotional conferences such as *The Charlottesville Tapes*, reviewed by Sorkin in a hilariously scathing send-up in iambic pentameter.

The book, however, is not all invective. Sorkin is as generous with his praise for the worthy as he is critical of the reprehensible. Among those he anoints: Alvar Aalto, John Hedjuk, Richard Rogers, Carlo Scarpa and James Stirling. No attempt has been made to impose a theme on these essays other than Sorkin's own commitment to ideas. The result—edifying and entertaining—is a solid examination of the major architectural issues of the '80s from a unique and gifted source.

Thomas K. McLaughlin, Jr.

The See-Through Years: Creation and Destruction in Texas Architecture and Real Estate, 1981-1991

By Joel Warren Barna. 288 pp. Houston: Rice University Press. \$27.50 cloth.

Joel Barna is not pleased with what he saw in Texas in the 1980s. And why should he be? Having sat through the decade with a front-row seat overlooking one of the largest, most economically devastating, building booms in U.S. history, he could hardly have emerged without a sense of cynicism about the forces that control and produce architecture. Those forces, in general, do not include architects, "far from the most important part of the team assembled by developers to produce architectural projects," says Barna, who edits *Texas Architect* magazine and contributes to *Progressive Architecture*. Architects specialize in creating and controlling access to cultural objects, Barna adds, and "what they know of the public is based on observations that ignore or deny the importance of the economic marketplace."

This book, however, has very little to do with architects and everything to do with the marketplace, which is what makes *The See-Through Years* universal enough in its message to be relevant to those who have never set foot in Texas. Barna steps well beyond observations on the form-making of architecture and the ins-and-outs of design cliques to explore the terrain of politics, financing and class conflicts as they influence city and suburban development. This is a book with villains—like J.R. McConnell, a convicted felon who, from nothing, amassed holdings of \$500 million by bilking financial institutions of as much as \$162 million, according to federal officers. McConnell electrocuted himself while in jail in 1988, but not before helping to bring down several of the 168 S&Ls and 334 banks that went belly-up in Texas in the late '80s.

This, too, is a book with victims. Barna cites staggering foreclosure figures that give a human dimension to the financial debacle. (In one county alone, nearly 400,000 people lost their homes, along with their down payments and the investment from personal income made to cover housing costs.) Consider the implications for all cities in Barna's account of the whittling away of Texas

(continued on page 29)

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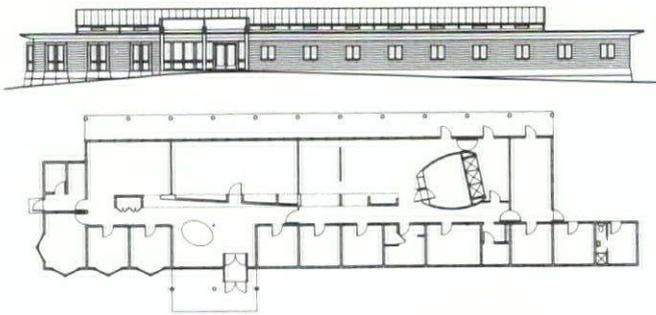


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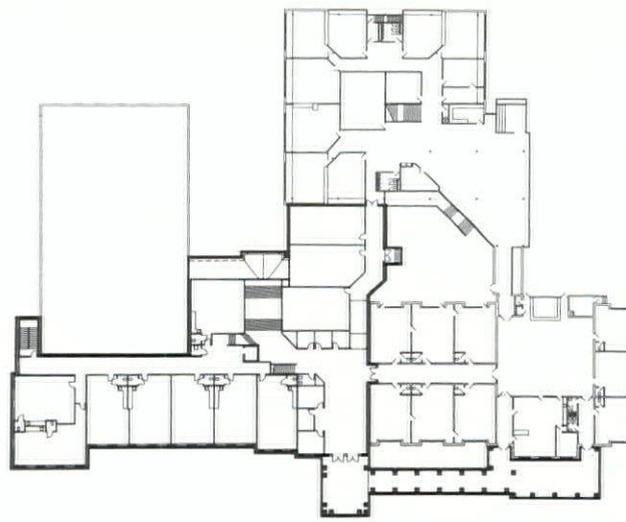
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Architect: VMDO Architects, Charlottesville
Project: The Wildlife Center of Virginia

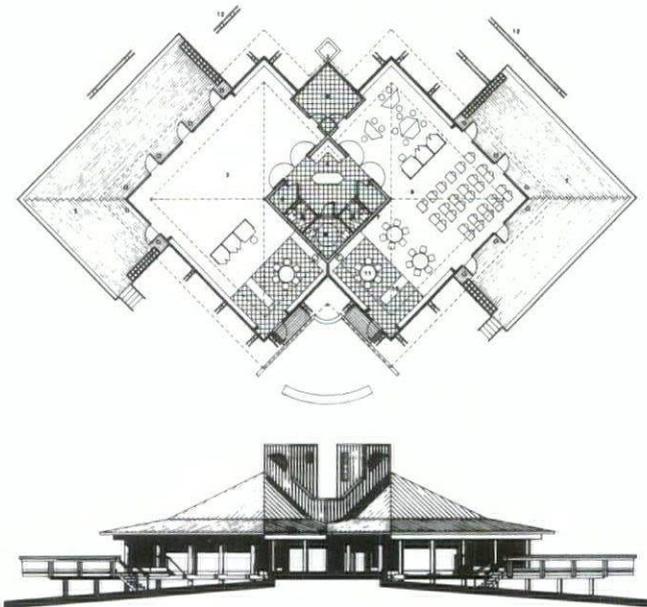
Makeshift facilities will give way to a new 5,700-square-foot building for education and treatment components of this wildlife center near Waynesboro. The sloped-roof main space, flanked by office and service spaces, opens to the adjoining George Washington National Forest. 804-296-5684.



Architect: William Henry Harris & Associates, Richmond
Project: St. Christopher's Lower School Addition

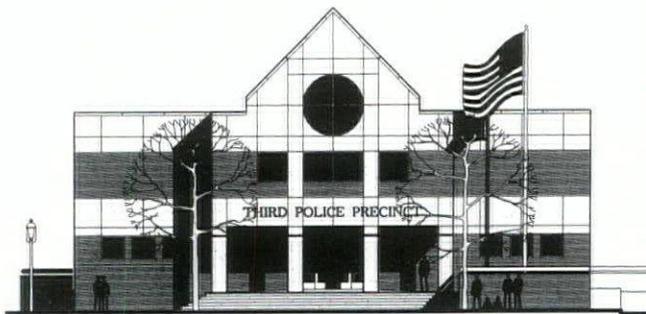
This 26,500-square-foot addition incorporates three pavilions to establish distinct focal points for the Lower School. Designed to blend with campus traditional architecture, it will provide 15 new classrooms and a multipurpose art resource room along with renovation of the existing buildings. 804-780-0070.

26



Architects: James William Ritter Architect, Alexandria and Joanne Goldfarb Architect, Alexandria
Project: Classroom Building, Burgundy Farm Country Day School

Four classrooms in two buildings, this project is designed to "tread lightly" in the existing woods. Through the use of decks, windows and skylights, the natural environment is used to enhance the learning experience at this private day school. 703-548-4405.



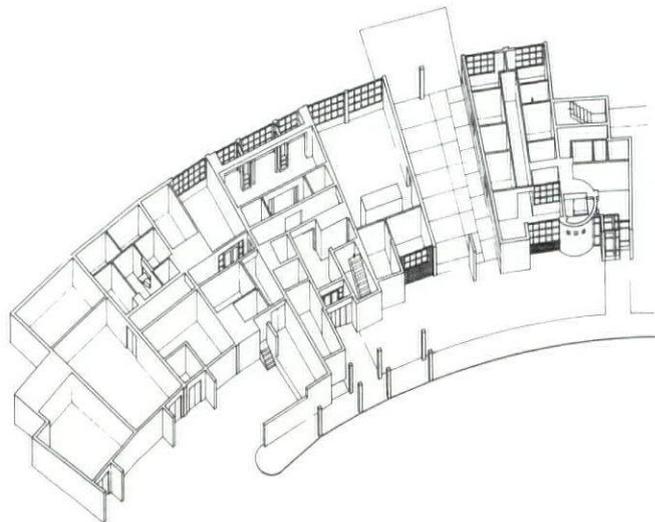
Architect: Hening Vest Covey, Richmond
Project: Third Police Precinct

The Third Police Precinct provides a new two-story, 13,600-square-foot facility and 90-car parking deck to be located at the corner of Meadow Street and Grayland Avenue in Richmond. The facility replaces an existing precinct building located on Laburnum Avenue. 804-230-0065.



Architect: Dewberry & Davis, Richmond
Project: Western Laboratory/Medical Examiner's Facility

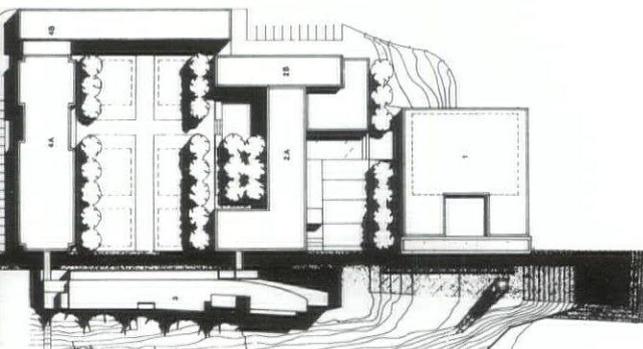
This 56,000-square-foot facility in Roanoke County will house state-of-the-art laboratories for serology/DNA profiling, trace evidence, drug analysis, toxicology, firearms, latent prints, questioned documents, and a forensic pathology laboratory for the medical examiner. 804-643-8061.



Architect: Farmer Puckett Warner Architects, Charlottesville
Project: Crescent Halls Renovation

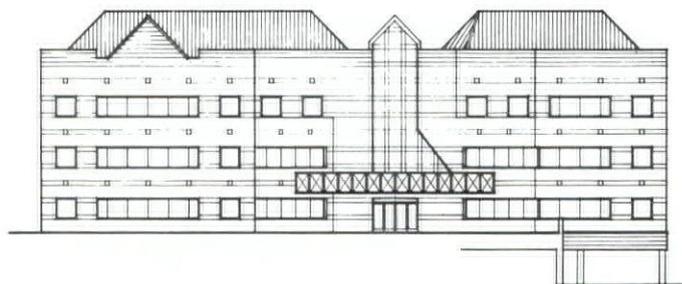
This renovation of elderly housing improved the space while accomplishing mandated accessibility and life safety modifications. A maze of windowless rooms and corridors was transformed into a well-organized series of communal rooms with clear circulation paths and increased natural light. 804-293-7258.

27



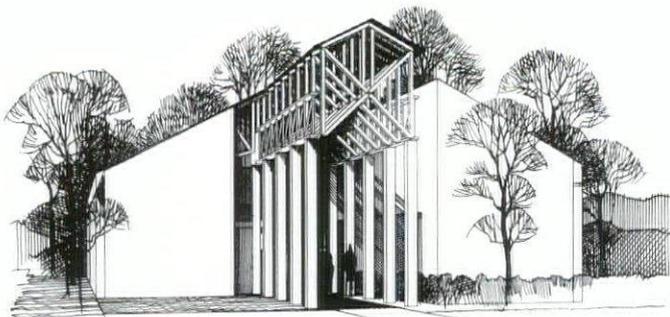
Architect: Balzer and Associates, Inc., Roanoke
Project: Education and Development Center, Clinch Valley College

This project, designed in association with Pasanella + Klein Stolzman + Berg of New York, provides a 30,000-square-foot classroom building with connections to existing structures to facilitate circulation between academic spaces. The college's upper precinct plan was reorganized to anticipate growth. 703-772-9580.



Architect: Paul Temples/Associates, Fairfax
Project: Kaiser Permanente Burke Medical Center

This site feasibility and preliminary study for a 71,500-square-foot medical facility calls for space to accommodate 27 doctors and support staff for internal medicine, OB/GYN, pediatrics, optometry and radiology. Also included will be labs, a pharmacy and administrative space. 703-359-8600.



Architect: Carlton Abbott and Partners, Williamsburg
Project: Williamsburg Unitarian Universalists Church

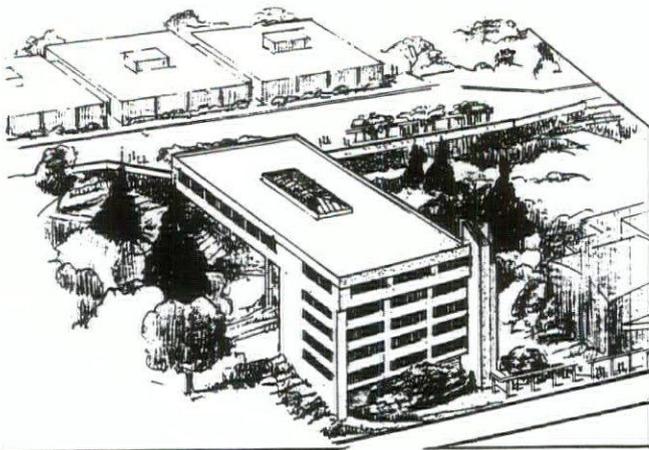
Sited on 10 acres, this first-phase sanctuary building will be the central feature of a complex to include education and fellowship buildings, outdoor meditation spaces and a forest chapel. The building features an exposed wood framing system and interior spaces which modulate along a central spine. 804-220-1095.



Architect: Bond, Comet, Westmoreland + Hiner, Richmond
Project: John Tyler Community College, Midlothian Campus

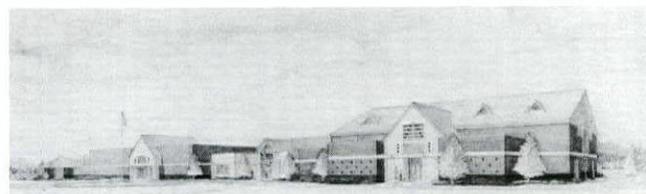
Phase one plans for this new campus include a single facility to accommodate the academic, administrative and support services for 1,500 students. The building is organized as four wings along a center concourse, which is located on a pedestrian spine along which future growth will occur. 804-788-4774.

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Architect: Thompson & Litton, Inc., Wise
Project: Southwest Virginia Community College

A key component of this project in Richlands, Virginia, is a strong connection between the upper and lower quadrants of the campus. The 53,500-square-foot, six-level academic building will contain the Learning Resources/Library Center on the upper level and a lower-level Allied Health Center. 703-328-2161.



Architect: Motley + Associates, Roanoke
Project: Blacksburg Elementary School

This 600-student elementary school is derived from a component plan design by the architect and built previously for the same school system. The use of sloped metal roofs and fine brick detailing help adapt this iteration to its rural site and nearby neighborhoods. 703-344-1212.

(continued from page 24)

cities: "Falling family incomes, decaying infrastructure, absentee ownership, crime, industrial incursion, and other destructive forces pushed houses, blocks, streets, and neighborhoods from decline to decay to abandonment throughout the 1980s; each increment of loss meant both bigger problems and decreased resources for the officials trying to hold their cities together." Some call it progress, but in Barna's penetrating book the excesses of the decade past are stripped of their gloss. Through its enlightening look into social process, *The See-Through Years* challenges the values that underpinned a cataclysmic period in real estate growth and opens the door for reexamination.

Vernon Mays

No Way to Build a Ballpark and Other Irreverent Essays on Architecture

By Allan Temko. Illustrated. 271 pp. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. \$14.95 paper.

It is, one would think, a sweet job: writing on architecture for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. The "City on the Bay" is home to rugged terrain, turbulent history, unparalleled vistas and sophisticated tastes all peppered with a slight Asian flavor. But if Allan Temko, winner of the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for criticism, has developed a love affair with the city he has covered for 30 years, he also has acquired a keen eye, long memory and watchdoglike skepticism for the constantly shifting minuet danced by politicians, environmentalists, planners, developers and architects who jointly shape the Bay area.

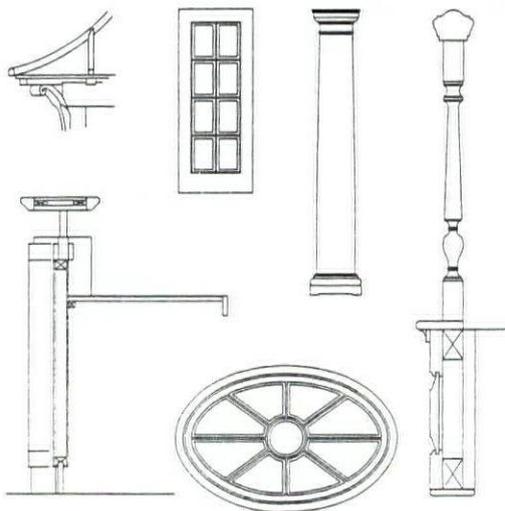
No Way to Build a Ballpark is the first compilation of his ironic and beautifully phrased articles. Temko's interest is not limited to buildings and spaces; he strives to involve his readers in the behind-the-scenes deal-making, tradeoffs, often-greedy and occasionally enlightened civic leadership that make San Francisco so dynamic. His essays form a social and economic history of Northern California as much as an isolated musing on the aesthetics of individual projects. In the 1961 essay that gives this book its name, Temko recounts the planning of Candlestick Park and the experience of watching a game there. Though written 30 years ago, the questions he poses are starkly relevant even today. Wrote Temko: "Although insufficient money is available nowadays for housing, schools, hospitals and even modest neighborhood playgrounds, there seems to be no shortage of funds for the national pastime."

One of Temko's recurring themes is that good design should not be confused with passing styles which might satisfy the budgets of developers or the public's fickle tastes. "As they say in the trade, it's a killer building," he writes in a review of the Nordstrom store in a new downtown mall. "People love the theatrical environment, inside and out, as if it were real architecture." Hmmm. This attack on the substitution of synthetic experience for something real strikes a responsive chord in those of us who watch as Disney cranks into gear for its history-oriented theme park in Northern Virginia. Experience suggests that the new Disney park is going to be a lot of fun, but something deep inside is also troubled. What's wrong with this picture? Temko's words, even from a continent away, can help those of us back East to sort out artifice from substance - always a challenge when contemplating the increasingly blurred lines of the American landscape.

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Coming Up

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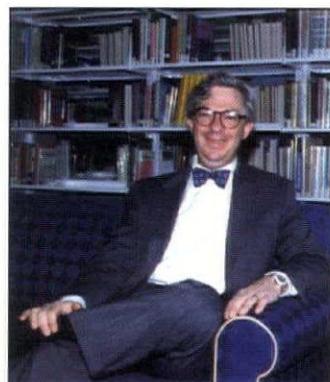
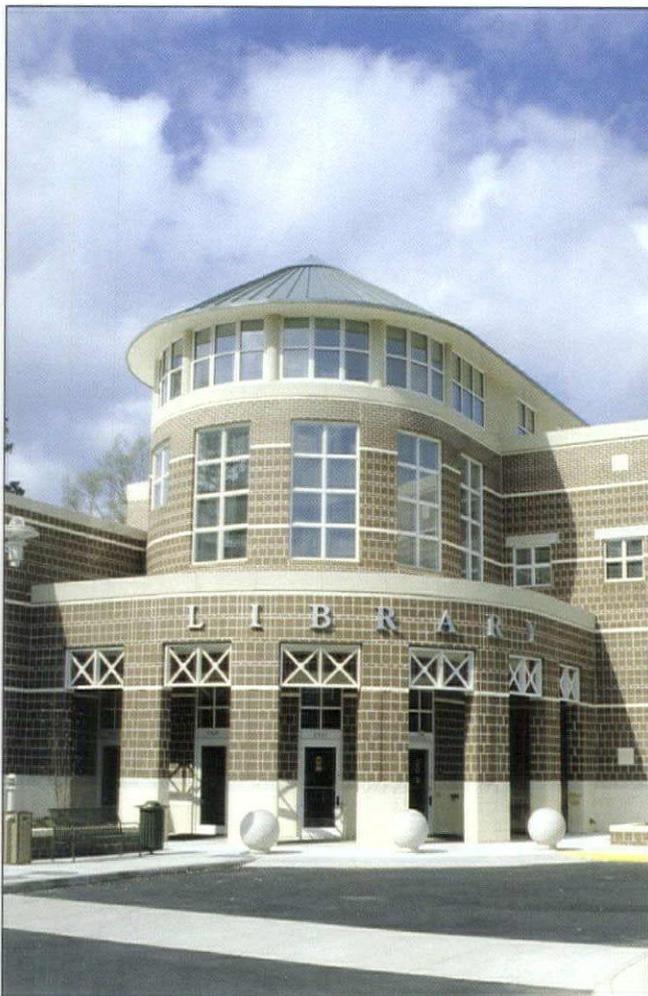
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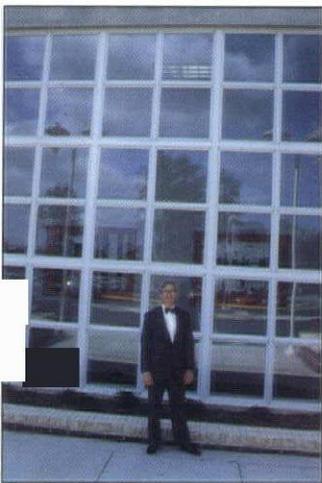
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